

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FRANKF 00884 010842Z
ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMCONSUL BREMEN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, GW
SUBJ: CDU MAKES COALITION OFFER TO FDP FOR 1977 HESSIAN LANDTAG
ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: ALFRED DREGGER, HESSIAN CDU LEADER AND CANDIDATE
FOR MINISTER-PRESIDENT IN THE 1978 HESSIAN LANDTAG ELECTIONS,
HAS EXTENDED A COALITION OFFER TO THE FDP. HE SUGGESTS THAT
THE FDP COULD CHANGE FROM COALITION WITH THE SPD TO ONE WITH THE
CDU AT THE HESSIAN LEVEL WITHOUT ABANDONING ITS BASIC PRINCIPLES.
HE PROMISES THAT THE CDU WOULD NOT USE A HESSIAN CDU-FDP
COALITION AT WIESBADEN TO DESTROY OR BLOCK THE SPD-FDP
NATIONAL COALITION AT BONN, AND HE PROMISES THE FDP
TWO IMPORTANT CABINET POSTS EVEN IF THE CDU WINS AN
ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS. IF THE FDP
DOES NOT ACCEPT THE COALITION OFFER, THE CDU WILL ATTEMPT
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PAGE 02 FRANKF 00884 010842Z

TO WIN THE MORE MODERATE FDP SUPPORTERS. HESSIAN FDP
LEADER GRIES HAS NOTED THE OFFER WITH INTEREST AND SAYS
THAT IT WILL BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED EVEN THOUGH HE HAS
"CONSIDERABLE DOUBT" THAT AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED ON A
COALITION. THE INITIAL REACTION FROM THE SPD IS TO TAKE
THE OFFER AS EVIDENCE THAT THE CDU BELIEVES AN ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY IS BEYOND ITS REACH. END SUMMARY.

2. HESSIAN CDU LEADER ALFRED DREGGER, WHO IS THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR MINISTER-PRESIDENT IN THE LANDTAG ELECTIONS THIS OCTOBER, EXTENDED A SWEEPING COALITION OFFER TO THE FDP DURING THE 45TH HESSIAN CDU CONFERENCE AT FULDA, JAN 28. IN SUMMARY, THIS OFFER INCLUDES: (A) ALTHOUGH THE FDP HAS BECOME A "LEFT-LIBERAL PROGRESSIVE" PARTY DURING ITS COALITION WITH THE SPD, SUFFICIENT PREREQUISITES EXIST TO PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR THE CDU AND THE FDP TO WORK TOGETHER IN A SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE WITHOUT EITHER PARTY ABANDONING ITS BASIC POSITIONS; (B) THE CDU WOULD NOT ATTEMPT, THROUGH THE BUNDESRAT, TO DESTROY OR BLOCK THE SPD-FDP FEDERAL COALITION AND SPECIFICALLY OFFERED TO DISCUSS THIS POINT WITH THE FDP BEFORE IT MAKES A STATEMENT ON COALITION IN JUNE; AND (C) THE FDP WOULD BE ASSURED OF "TWO IMPORTANT CABINET POSTS" AT WIESBADEN EVEN IF THE CDU WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

3. DREGGER STRUCK A CONCILIATORY AND STATESMANLIKE NOTE THROUGHOUT AN HOUR-LONG ADDRESS WHICH WAS FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED BY APPLAUSE. HE NOTED THE HESSIAN CDU PHILOSOPHY CONSISTS OF SOCIAL, LIBERAL, AND CONSERVATIVE-NATIONAL ELEMENTS WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE FDP'S HISTORICAL BASES. ADHERENCE TO THESE PRINCIPLES ENABLED THE CDU TO IMPROVE ITS POSITION IN THE 1970 AND 1974 LANDTAG ELECTIONS SO THAT IT IS NOW THE LARGEST PARTY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 FRANKF 00884 010842Z

IN HESSE; HAD THE FDP JOINED FORCES WITH THE CDU EARLIER, THEY COULD HAVE WON EITHER OF THESE ELECTIONS. VOTERS ARE NO LONGER TAKEN IN BY SEEMINGLY PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ESPOUSED BY A "SMALL NONCONFORMIST ELITE" AND RECOGNIZE THAT FREEDOM AND SELF-DETERMINATION CAN BE ACHIEVED BETTER BY A PARTY THAT IS BOTH LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE.

4. DREGGER LEFT NO DOUBT OF THE CONSEQUENCES IF THE FDP DECLINED TO CHANGE PARTNERS AT WIESBADEN IN THE STATEMENT "IF WE CANNOT WIN THE FDP, WE MUST WIN ITS VOTERS". HE ASSERTED THIS WAS LESS A THREAT THAN A STATEMENT OF FACT IN LIGHT OF THE CDU'S GAINS IN THE 1974 LANDTAG ELECTIONS AND SWEEPING VICTORIES IN THE 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS.

5. HESSIAN FDP LEADER GRIES HAS NOTED DREGGER'S OFFER "WITH INTEREST" AND SAYS THAT IT WILL BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. THE PRESS FURTHER QUOTES GRIES AS EXPRESSING "CONSIDERABLE DOUBT" THAT ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED WITH THE CDU. INITIAL REACTION FROM THE HESSIAN SPD HAS BEEN TO TAKE DREGGER'S OFFER AS CDU RECOGNITION THAT IT HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING AN

ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

6. COMMENT: ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT SPD MINISTER-PRESIDENT BOERRER HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN REPAIRING THE DAMAGE THAT HIS PREDECESSOR, ALBERT OSSWALD, DID TO THE PARTYS REPUTATION. IN CONTRAST TO INDICATIONS SIX MONTHS AGO THAT THE CDU MIGHT TAKE OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTES IN OCT, WE UNDERSTAND THAT AN UNPUBLISHED RECENT POLL INDICATES THAT THE CDU NOW HAS, AT BEST, ONLY A 50-50 CHANCE OF WINNING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. OUR CONTACTS IN THE PARTY CERTAINLY CITE THESE ODDS AND SEEM PRESUADED TO BELIEVE THAT THE FDP WILL PASS THE FIVE-PERCENT HURDLE.

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PAGE 04 FRANKF 00884 010842Z

7. BOTH THE CDU AND THE FDP ARE KEEPING THEIR OPTIONS OPEN. DREGGER IS ACTUALLY GIVING AWAY VERY LITTLE SINCE HIS FULDA ADDRESS MOVES THE HESSIAN CDU INTO A MORE MODERATE STANCE, QUITE APART FROM HIS OFFER TO THE FDP.

SIMILARLY, BY WAITING UNTIL JUNE TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON COALITION, GRIES CAN ASSESS DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL AND IN THE LOWER SAXONY ELECTIONS IN EARLY JUNE. HESSIAN CDU POLITICAL LEADERS TELL US THEY BELIEVE GRIES WOULD BE PREPARED TO SWITCH COALITION PARTNERS TO STAY IN OFFICE., BUT THEY KARRY'S STRONG DISLIKE FOR DREGGERS CONSERVATIVE VIEWS CONTINUES. DREGGERS OFFER MAY THEREFORE CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISORDER WE DETECT IN THE HESSIAN FDP, WHICH IN ANY EVENT IS BECOMING RESTIVE AS THE SPD IS GETTING ALL THE CREDIT FOR BOERNER'S EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE REPUTATION AND CREDIBILITY OF THE WIESBADEN GOVERNMENT.

8. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DREGGER CONSULTED WITH CDU FRIENDS AND ADVISORS BEFORE MAKING HIS OFFER TO THE FDP. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE FULDA MEETING, DREGGER

DENIED THAT HE OBTAINED THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL CDU PRESIDUM, ON THE GROUND THAT THE OFFER IS CONSISTENT WITH CDU POLICY. HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT HE DID NOT CONSULT BEFOREHAND WITH STRAUSS OR THE CSU.

9. DREGGER CONFIDED THAT HE EXPECTS THE FDP TO REJECT HIS OFFER WHICH WOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE FDP IS CAPTIVE TO THE SPD AND THEREBY CAUSE MODERATE FDP SUPPORTERS TO VOTE FOR HIM THIS FALL.

10. REPORT ON THE FULDA CONFERENCE FOLLOWS. END COMMEND. BLAKE
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